

A  
S E R M O N  
Preached before the  
K I N G

A T  
W H I T E - H A L L ,

On Decemb. 1. M.DC. LXVII.

B Y  
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one of His MAJESTIES Chaplains in Ordinary.

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## S. JOHN vi. 14.

*Then those Men, when they saw the  
Miracle which Jesus did, said,  
Of a truth this is that Prophet that  
should come into the world.*



THE Text is the Conclusion of  
a Story that reaches from the  
beginning of the Chapter to  
this Verse.

The persons concerned in it  
were of the *Jewish Nation*: a  
Nation antiently famous and flourishing; but  
at that time, under the yoke of a *Roman* Con-  
quest: from which they yet hop't for delive-  
rance, by a *Prophet*, whom they lookt for about  
that time to come into the World.

In this Critical time, comes our Lord *Jesus*  
to shew himself; poor and contemptible to see to,  
but withal so *mighty in word and deed*, that many  
believed him to be that Prophet; the Rulers  
knew not what to think of him, and the People

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flockt after him in multitudes, which way soever he went.

In this Chapter He went over the *Sea of Galilee* (so they call it, though in truth 'tis but a *Lake*) the People, about 5000 of them, went about the *Lake* to meet him. The place where they found him was *Desert*, they were farr from any house or home, what Provisions they brought with them were spent, and they seemed to be in no small distress; which He mercifully Considered, and miraculously Relieved. Out of that small pittance which one \* *Lad* had brought with him, He furnished a sufficient meal for 5000 persons, and caused twelve Baskets to be filled with those Fragments they had left.

\* *miraculum*  
Vers 9.

This they all saw, and were amaz'd at the thing, and magnified the Person, whom they could Judg to be no other than what himself profest that He was, namely, that He was *That Prophet that should come into the World.*

Which Judgment of theirs, how Reasonable it was on their part, and what the Use of it should be to us, are the things I am now to consider.

The Reason of their Judgment stands briefly thus: They lookt for a Prophet to come about that time; and that he should make himself known



known to 'em by Miracles : They had heard a great Fame of Christ, and now they saw him do a great Miracle ; Therefore they concluded that He must be that Prophet.

First, That the *Jews* did look for one to come into the World, one *that should be Born* of their Nation ; a great *Prophet*, a *Messias*, one Anointed of God, for the Revealing of his Will, and for the Redemption of his People ; this is acknowledged on all hands. It was a chief Article of the Jewish Faith, the very *Hope* and *Expectation of Israel* : For, *to them were committed the Oracles of God* ; in which they had Promises and Prophecies of him, almost from the beginning of the World, to the end of their Scriptures. The time would fail me, if I should go about to reckon them. But methinks a short reckoning may serve, when I consider, that *Moses* to these *Jews* was *instar omnium* : He was the Man in whom they did trust, and he Prophesied of such a *Messias* to come, *Deut. xviii. 15, & 18. vers.* 'Tis a remarkable Text, and therefore I quote you both the place and the words. *Verse 15.* *Moses* speaks to the People of *Israel*, in his own words, *The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy Brethren, like unto me, unto him*

shall ye hearken: and then to assure them, that he said not this of himself, he repeats the words that God spoke to him upon Mount Sinai to this purpose, verse 18. *I will raise them up a Prophet from among their Brethren like unto thee.* Now, that Christ was one of their Brethren, the Jews cannot but acknowledg: and that Christ was like unto *Moses*, we Christians are able to shew them. But to spare us that trouble, they say, this Text was not meant of the Messias. Of whom then? why, of such Prophets as God would raise up from time to time in his Church. But there were many such Prophets, and the Text speaks expressly but of one: whom therefore *Aben Ezra*\* will have to be *Joshua* the successor of *Moses*. *Abraham Seba*\* sayes, it is intended of the Prophet *Jeremy* But neither This, nor That, nor any other Prophet, can fill up the Character of this person; of whom God sayes, he shall be כמֹשֶׁה like unto thee: *Moses* sayes כמותי he shall be like unto me. For never was there any Prophet כמֹשֶׁה like unto *Moses*, Deut. xxxiv. 10. nor ever will be, sayes *Maimonides*, except the Messias, who, sayes he\*, shall be a great Prophet, and like to our Master *Moses*.

\* In their  
Comments  
on the  
place.

\* In *Teshuva*  
Cap. 9.

It may seem strange, that our Modern Jews, who so passionately dote on the hopes of a  
Messia,

Messia, should be so loath to hear of him in this Propheſie. But there is no ſtrangenefs in it, to him that conſiders the Witchcraft of Contradiſtion. They think themſelves bound to find another ſenſe of the words, becauſe the Apoſtles of Chriſt have quoted them in this ſenſe. St. *Peter*, Aſt. iii. 22. St. *Steven*, Aſt. vii. 37. both of them, in expreſs terms, applying this Propheſie to Chriſt. Not to ſay that others alſo do it in general words; namely, *Philip*, Joh. i. 45. St. *Paul* in the xxvi. & xxviii. Chap. of the *Acts*. Nay, our Saviour himſelf, *Joh. v. 45.* telling the Jews, that *Moses wrote concerning him.* All which Quotations in the New Teſtament, as they do prejudice the Modern Jews, againſt the true underſtanding of this Propheſie; ſo they plainly prove, that it was thus underſtood by their Forefathers: For elſe it had been a vain thing for the Apoſtles to go about to prove Chriſt to be the Meſſias, out of ſuch a Text as thoſe Jews underſtood in a different ſenſe: Eſpecially when there were ſo many other Texts of Scripture, which the Jews do acknowledg to be meant of the Meſſias, that could have been as eaſily alledg'd by them, and as aptly applied to Chriſt, as this Propheſie which is now in Queſtion.

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For the proof of what I say, I shall produce two or three such Texts; and my choice shall be of those, that not only foretold that a Messias was to come, but also markt out the time when he was to be expected: *Gen. xlix 10.* is *Jacobs* Propheſie, that *The Scepter shall not depart from Juda, till Shilo come*; that is, *there shall never cease to be Kings and Princes of the house of Juda, till the Messias come*: So both the *Targums* render it; and so does *Onkelos*, whose Paraphrase is of greatest authority among the Jews, and who himself lived about 40 years before Christs Incarnation. Another Propheſie there was, but along time after this; it was foretold when the second Temple was building, that *The desire of the Nations, in Haggai*; *The Lord whom they sought, in Malachi*; should come, and that suddenly, to that Temple. The texts are *Haggai ii. 7.* & *Mal. iii. 1.* Both which places are clearly meant of the Messias, and the latter of them is so interpreted by *Aben Ezra*\*, and *David Kimchi*\*, two of the learnedest Blasphemers of Christ in the Jewish Nation.

\* In their  
Comments  
on the  
places.

I shall offer but one Testimony more, and it is from that Prophet, whom I think no man, without invincible obstinacy, can read and consider, and not be a Christian; so unquestionable he  
is

is for his Authority, so evident in his Predictions, so punctual in the Circumstances of them : I mean the Prophet *Daniel* ; who bewailing the desolation of *Jerusalem*, and the 70 years Captivity of his Nation, was told by an Angel they should soon be restor'd, and *Jerusalem* be rebuilt. But farther, that after 7 times 70, that is, after 490 years, from the going forth of the Commandement for the rebuilding of *Jerusalem*, they should be a Nation no more ; That within the last 70 of these years, the Messias should come, *the holy One should be Anointed* ; *Dan. ix. 24.* and that he should be cut off, but not for himself, Verse 26. and then, that a Prince should come, and destroy the holy City and the Sanctuary, as there it follows in the end of the Chapter.

How Easie a thing was it for any considering man in Christs daies, to Reckon within a small matter of those 490 years ? I say, within a small matter ; because there might be some doubt where to fix the Beginning of that reckoning : whether it should begin at the First Commandment, for the rebuilding of *Jerusalem* ; or, at the Last, which was about 50 years after. Which possibly was the cause, why *R. Nechonia ben Hakkana*, who lived about 50 years before Christs Incarnation, said, as *Grotius* \* tells us, *\* De veritate Christi. Relig. l. 5. §. 14.*

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( for I know not his Author ) we are now within 50 years of the Messias; and R. *Jose*, who lived about 50 years after Christs death, said, according to R. *Jacob* in *Caphor*, we are now past the time of the Messia.

Certain it is, that the 100 years between these, was a time of great expectation, of some extraordinary Person to come into the World: which Expectation began in *Judea*, and from thence it spread even all the World over. Among the *Gentiles* there were strange Intimations of an Universal King that was then to be born; as may appear from *Cicero*<sup>a</sup>, and *Virgil*<sup>b</sup>, from *Suetonius*<sup>c</sup>, and *Tacitus*<sup>d</sup>, in their several Writings. Among the *Jews* it was a Question in every mans mouth, *where is he that should be born?* so the *Pharisees* to *John Baptist*, *Art thou he?* and so the *Baptist* to our Saviour, *Art thou he that should come?* so the People among themselves, *Is not this that Prophet?* They were at it upon every Occasion, and dearly they paid for it at last. For they put the Nations about them all into a ferment with these Discourses, and then into a rage with their Commotions, which could never be laid but with the Destruction of their Temple and Government; according to those Prophecies, *which being read to them in their Syna-*

a *L. 1. Epist.*

1. & l. 2. de *Divinatione.*

b *Eclog. 4.*

c *De Vespasian. c. 4.*

d *Hist. l. 4.*

*Synagogues every Sabbath day, as St. Paul \* saith,* Act. xiii. 27. *they fulfil'd, because they understood not.*

And as for those obstinate wretches, whom God suffered to outlive that Destruction, when the terrour of it was a little over, and they begin to recollect themselves, and to consider what hope they had left of the Promise; the Scepter being now departed from *Juda*, there being no Temple left, and the 490 years long since expired; what a Confusion they were in, 'tis not possible to express, nor easie to imagine, without reading of their *Talmud*, where \* in the 4th \* In Sanhedrin, c. Chel- part, 4th. Book, 11th Chap. you may find them casting up among themselves, what hopes they had left of their Messias. One reflects upon that Prophesie of the School of *Elias*, that the World should last 6000 years; 2000 years before the Law \*, and 2000 under the Law, and 2000 un- \* חמור der the Messias: which makes well for us, because Christ came ~~much~~ about the year 4000; but made ill for them, because that year was then past and gone. Another makes mention of two old Prophecies, that the Messias should come after 85 Jubilees, that is, about the year 4200; but those Prophecies gave them no comfort, that year also being past and gone. A third said, all our prefixed times are at an



end; a fourth, that the Messias was come already and lived somewhere *incognito*; a fifth, wisht the bones of him broken that should keep any more reckoning of time. A strange and a certain accomplishment of that most ancient Prophecie\* concerning the state of the Jews after their rejection of the Messiah; that *God would smite them with madness, and blindness, and astonishment of heart; that they should grope at noonday, as the blind gropes in darkness*; a Prophecie that ought not to be lightly past by, but I must not go beyond my line.

\* Deuter.  
xxviii. 28,  
29.

I have shewed, that our Prophet was foretold, and that a time was set for his coming, and that in Christs daies that time was come. Now what could the Jews desire more but some Token to know him by? And such a Token was this σημεῖον in my Text. It signifies properly a Sign, though we translate it a Miracle; which obliges me to shew what a Miracle is, and how fitly it was ordein'd to be the Sign of the great Prophet.

A Miracle, according to the derivation of the word, is such a work as is apt to raise Wonder and Admiration in us. And admiration proceeds from the ignorance of causes. Therefore Fools wonder at many things, because they know



know the causes of few things : Wise men admire at those things which proceed from occult causes in nature, though the things are very usual and ordinary : All men admire at those things which are unusual and extraordinary ; which if they also exceed the whole power of nature, so far as any man is able to judge of it, then they are properly and strictly called Miracles.

In every work, by the laws of Nature, there must be an Active cause naturally able and ready to work ; and there must be a Passive matter fitly disposed for it : without both which, nothing can be done.

If any thing be done without either of these, then it is said to be Supernatural. 1<sup>st</sup>. On the Passive part, when either there is no matter at all, as in the Creation of the world out of nothing ; or, when there is such a matter as has no fitness for such a use, as it was in the Creation, and will be at the Resurrection, of living man out of the dust of the Earth. 2<sup>ly</sup>. In respect of the Agent, when the work is above the reach of any natural cause, above the power of any Creature that we can know of, as the staying of the Sun in *Joshuab's* daies ; or when no second cause is employed in it, or such a cause as has no disposition for it, no activity but

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what is Supernaturally given it; in all such cases a work is said to be Miraculous.

This kind of work God is pleased to make use of, as the Seal of his Commission to any Person, as the Attestation of his hand to any Doctrine: so that if any Person or Doctrine be Blameless in other respects, and only Questionable for its Authority; it sufficiently clears its Authority to be from God, that he sends it, or suffers it to come to us, with the Testimony of Miracles.

Thus *Moses*, being sent from God to the people of *Israel*, was appointed to take two or three Witnesses along with him; namely, two or three Signs, to assure that captious people, that he was truly a Prophet sent from God. First he turns his Rod into a Serpent, and then that Serpent into a Rod again; he makes his hand in an instant become leprous, and immediately restores it again; he takes up water out of the River, and poures it out perfect blood upon the ground.

Thus also, that Prophet like unto *Moses*, *Deut. xviii. 15.* was promised to come with signs like him, Verse 21, 22. To the same effect are many other Texts of the old Testament. But I think that one is enough, if I can show that  
the

the Jews did believe it, that they depended upon it, and were ready on all occasions to exact this proof of a Messias. It is not unlike, that the Devil himself (who is certainly a great Textuary) had some thought of this, when he tempted our Saviour to command the stones to become bread. But as for the Jews, it was unquestionably their way; which St. Paul observes, 1 Cor. i. 21. *the Jews require a sign; tell them of their Prophet, and presently they call for a Sign. How often were they upon these termes with our Saviour? He could be no Messias for them, unless he would shew 'em a Sign. Though some of them before hand were resolv'd not to be convinc'd with it, yet none of 'em were to be satisfied without it; nay not without many signs, as he tells them, Joh. i. 5. \* Except ye see signs and \* Joh. iv. 49. wonders, ye will not believe. And 'tis observable of Barcozba, that famous Impostor, who set up for a Messias their own way, pretending to make 'em a great flourishing People, which so won him their hearts, that for a while they generally adher'd to him; yet at last distrusting him for want of success, they put him to death only for want of a sign. Which though Maimonides \* denies, as also he does this Doctrine, \* In Hilchoth Melachim, c. 11. for*

for

for fear of being prest with the undeniable Miracles of our Saviour; yet the *Talmud* affirms both these, as to that of *Barcozba*\*, IV. 4 11. And as to this Doctrine† I. 1. 1. as also the *Midrash Coheleth*, c. 1. teaching, that all past Miracles shall be as nothing in comparison of the Miracles of the *Messias*. Which being the ancient Tradition of the Jews, founded in the promises of God, deriv'd to them in the prophecies of Scripture, which Scriptures were read to them every Sabbath day; it is no wonder that the Jews did set their hearts on this way of tryal.

It remains to shew, how Christ did answer their Expectation. Who as he was a Prophet above all other Prophets, so his Miracles were farr above all other Miracles. Never any one did Miracles like him, even his Enemies being Judges; no nor all that ever were before him according to their own computation. For where-as all the Prophets before him, in three or four thousand years, did but 74 Miracles, besides *Moses* who did 76 if their reckoning\* were true; Our Saviour alone in three or four years time at most, did more than it was possible to keep account of; insomuch that as *St. John* says\* in a proverbial expression, if they were all to be reckoned

\* *Mid. in Sanhedrin.*

† In *Bera-choth* c. 1. *Me-emathe korin.*

\* *v. Mens-  
seh ben Isra-  
el's Concili-  
ator, Part. I.  
Q. 11. in  
Deut.*

\* *Joh. xxi.  
25.*

reckoned together, the whole world could not contain the Books that should be written.

Whatsoever any man else did of this kind, whether Prophet or Apostle, he did it by a borrowed and limited Power; which he could neither communicate to others, nor exercise it himself, but by Gods especial appointment: but for Christ, who had *the fulness of the Godhead dwelling in him*; he did what he pleased, and when he pleased, by himself, or by others, being determin'd by nothing but by his own Goodness and Wisdom.

What part of the Creation, doth not afford us an instance of his Power? who had the blessed Angels at his call, and the damned Spirits subject to his will; who commanded the seas and the winds and they obeyed him; who guided the Fishes in the deep, which way he pleased; but especially for men, that were his peculiar charge, he provided against all their necessities and wants, their infirmities and miseries. He fed them by Miracle, he heal'd them by Miracle, of sundry diseases which were otherwise incurable: of inveterate Dropsies and Leprosies, of a Palsie of 38 years, of Blindness from ones birth; what could one do more, but to raise men from the dead? and thus he did divers, particularly *Lazarus* who had lain four daies buried in the grave.

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And these things he effected, as well absent as present, in an instant as by sensible degrees; by the applying of his hand, by the touch of his garment, by the word of his mouth, by the motion of his will; to shew that any means would serve, that no means were necessary, that all times and places were alike, to the Sovereign vertue that he imploy'd in the working of his Miracles.

Which works being so evident testimonies of a Divine Authority, and being design'd for so universal a Benefit, it was necessary that they should be as evidently and universally known. And this our Saviour seems to have considered in all his Miracles. If any of them were done Privately, which were but few in comparison, he commanded them not to be spoken of, that there might be no suspicion of Imposture. But for the generality of his works, he did them Openly and publicly; before multitudes, or in throngs; at Feasts, or in Synagogues, or in the streets, and in the open Sun; many of them in the Temple, and that at Passcover times, in the face of his watchful Enemies, and before a whole Nation of witnesses.

This Miracle in my Text, was done in a Desert, but it was in the presence of 5000 persons; whom

whom the Fame of Christs works had drawn thither to observe him, and therefore they could not well be surprized in the manner of it: nor could they be deceived in the Action it self; for they saw, and felt, and tasted the effects of it. He fully satisfied their hunger; and so farr their hopes, that they determined to look for no other Messias; being assur'd that this was He, *This of a Truth is that Prophet that should come into the world.*

I have done with the reason of their Judgment: and should next proceed to the Use of it; but that I am sensible of an Objection in the way, which some have started at this distance of time, to question the Judgment of that age, and to promote the Infidelity of this. I am sorry there should be any cause to mention it; that instead of carrying on the Building of God, and helping forward the duty of Christian life, we must be put to answer those Atheists that stand pecking at the Foundation. But we must be content, since God is pleas'd to suffer it. It is a vicious World that we live in, and alwaies so much Vice, so much Unbelief. Perhaps too, we are not farr from that time, of which Christ saies, *when the Son of Man comes, shall he find Faith upon the Earth?* If so, we are not like to prevail

Luk xviii. 8.



much against the Atheists. Howsoever we are bound to do our endeavour, and not to leave their Arguments unanswer'd, though in effect we only leave their Persons the more unexcusable.

Their Objection is, that these Evangelists being Christs followers, might boldly assert things for the honour of their Master and his Cause, which for ought we know have been as stiffly denied by the Opposite parties. I propound this Objection in behalf of a sort of men whose Invention is commonly better then their Reading.

For whosoever is any whit skill'd in Antiquity, must needs know, that the Ground of this Objection is false; Jews, Heathens, Mahometans, as many as write of this matter, do all confess, that our Saviour did work Miracles. For the *Mahometans*, they are *but of yesterday*, and know *nothing*: only this they say in general, for the brutish proof of their sensual Religion; that as Christ came with Miracles, so *Mahomet* came with the Sword. As for *Jews* and *Heathens*, who in Christs time, and after it, abounded with Writers and Learned men; there is no reason to imagine, but if they had had any Colour for it, they would as fiercely have denied Christs Miracles with their Pens, as they persecuted his Followers with Fire and Sword. But seeing it was  
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Empire, l. 2.  
c. 2, 3.



in vain to Deny those things, which so many thousands knew to be true; and the memory of which, was continually revived, by those fresh Miracles which the Primitive Christians wrought in Christs name: therefore either they chose to take no notice of them at all in their Writings; or if they mention'd Christs Miracles, they ascrib'd them to Magick or Diabolical Causes. And what can one ask more of an Enemy, as to matter of Fact; then that he should either speak out and confess it, or shew by his silence that he knows not how to deny it? No Jew can with reason deny Christ's Miracles; since they are confest by his own *Talmud* in divers places, specially\* in the 4<sup>th</sup> Part, the 9<sup>th</sup> Book. \*In *Aboda*  
 Nor no Heathen could in *Tertullian's* or *Justin* *Zara*.  
*Martyr's* daies; unless those Learned men were monstrous silly and impudent, who durst\* tell \**Justin M.*  
 their Emperours, they might finde proofs of in *Apol. 2.*  
 them in *Pilat's* Records which were then at *Rome.* *Tertull. in*  
*Apol. c. 21.*  
 They were such irrefragable Proofs, that nei- v. *Euseb.*  
 ther Jew nor Heathen had any thing to say to *Hist. l. 2. c. 2.*  
 them, but this, that they were done by Ma-  
 gick; which may be said of any thing, and signi-  
 fies just nothing: or, that they were done by *Evill*  
*Spirits*, which will not serve the turn of our A-  
 theist, who is as unwilling to believe that there is  
 a Devil, as that there is a God. But

But (besides these Quotations, which it were easie to multiply, if it were so proper for this place;) besides these, we have the greatest Assurance that in reason can be wisht for, of the truth of these Miracles. For what assurance can be had at such a distance, concerning things done 1600 years agoe? The best that can be expected, is a History written by some credible Persons that lived in those times. And such a History this is, or there is no such in the World. For that it was written by them whose Names it bears, no Adversary ever question'd, and all Christians have acknowledg'd, that have written from Age to Age ever since. Nor is it questioned, that the things here written are the same that were taught by the twelve Apostles: which Apostles our Saviour took along with him to be the constant Witnesses of all his actions; and they profess to have been present with him at most of the things that are here Written. Men so farr from being suspected of any Deceit, that their Simplicity and Ignorance has been their only Accusation. And that so many, such men, should conspire together, to faine incredible things, and to impose them upon the faith of Mankind: Why they should do this, without any Temptation of Honour, or Wealth, or Preferment; nay with certain

certain Assurance of persecution, and misery, and cruel death, which their Master foretold them, and they lookt for no other, and they were not mistaken in this: How they durst Adventure such stories with such Circumstances, of time, places, and persons, which they knew certainly would be sifted, and might easily have been disproved, if they had not been true; all this were as prodigiously strange in Them, as it would be now in Us, if we should not believe them.

But say, it were possible that they might be deceived themselves in Christs Miracles, yet sure they could not be so in his Resurrection; and I think whosoever believes his Resurrection, is much to blame if he doubts of any of his Miracles. This being that Sign of the Prophet *Jonas*; which Christ said \* he would reserve to the last place, to confound them that would not be Convinc't, and were therefore not worthy of any Other sign. \* Mat. xii. 39.

But what say they of his Resurrection? Jews and Heathens say in the General, that he was put to death. These Apostles tells us all the Particulars of it; and say farther, that after three daies he Rose again from the dead. That he show'd himself Alive to them; First to one or two at a time, then to all the twelve together,

ther, then to 500 of his followers at once, most of whom were alive when these things were written : but especially to those twelve Apostles , he shew'd himself by many Infallible proofs ; being Seen of them, and Conversing with them , for forty daies ; at the end whereof , being together with him upon Mount *Olivet* , after much discourse , they Beheld him taken up in a bright cloud, which carried him out of their sight.

Now is it reasonable to imagine, that all these men, all this while, had no use of their Reason, or had not so much as Common sense about them ? For if that Relation was false , then one of these things must be true : that either they were besides their Senses when they believ'd this ; or, they were out of their Wits , when they affirm'd it , and laid down their lives for the witnessing of that which they did not believe. And what then shall we say to that world of Christians , that Render'd themselves up to the belief of these men that had so little Reason to believe themselves ? 'Tis Prodigious to Think what I am about to say : and yet think it one must, or he can be no Atheist ; he must assent to all this which I am about to say. That a poor Young man , of the Meanest birth and breeding, of a most hateful Nation , and hated himself by that Nation ,

Nation, for taking upon him to be a Prophet sent 'em from God, for which he was laid hold of, and put to a bitter and most shameful Death. That after his death, a few Fishermen and others, as Mean as himself in all Circumstances, should still Proclaim that he was that Prophet: and confirm it with a Story of his Resurrection, and with loud boasts of Miracles wrought by him and his Followers, all which were utterly False; Promising all them that would believe in him, nothing in this world but Affliction and cruel Death, which their own Sufferings prov'd to be True: That such men, with no other Charms, should work such a Faith, in all the Wisest part of Mankind; and that with so lasting an Impression as Time has not been able to deface, no, nor Vice neither, which is the thing that makes Them desire to deface it. That so Impregnable a Faith should be bottom'd on so foul an Imposture, (Pardon me great God that I lend breath to their Blasphemies) 'tis a thing so prodigiously Incredible, that it could never enter into any man's head, unless he were for his Lust's sake as great a Monster of Credulity, as I have shew'd him, in other respects, to be a very Monster of Unbelief.

I fear this Discourse may have been larger than the Occasion ; nay I hope it rather in this place ; and would to God that it were wholly Superfluous, that there were no more Unbelievers in This world, then there will be in the Other ; and then I am sure there would be Few enough.

But I have now done with Them, and am to speak to your selves ; to You that believe the holy Scriptures, & desire to make a profitable Use of 'em. And the Use of this Scripture is, to observe what *these men* in my Text, did according to Reason, and (allowing for the difference of Circumstances) to do the same Thing our selves. Namely, if we have any Prophet yet to come, and the promise of Miracles to know him by ; then it is our Duty, when we see those Miracles , to acknowledge that Prophet : but if we have no such Prophet to expect, and no more Miracles to look for ; then it behoves us to make much of those Miracles , and that Prophet that we have already , and to look for No other. This appears to be the natural consequence of my Text.

It hath been proved, that Christ is that Prophet, of whom God has foretold us from the beginning of the World : and this Prophet has told

\*Mat. xxviii.  
20.

us, *\* Behold, I am with you to the end of the World.*

But have we any other to look for ? any other

other Prophet to come? any farther Miracles to know him by? It should seem that we have: For Christ saies words to that purpose; and he saies it not lightly, but he laies great weight upon it, Behold, saies he \*, *I tell you of this before. There shall arise false Christs and false Prophets, and shall show great Signs and Wonders; insomuch that (if it were possible) they shall deceive the very Elect.* Particularly, 2 Thess. ii. 9. *That Son of perdition; whose coming shall be after the working of Satan, with all power, and Signs, and lying wonders. So likewise, 1 Tim. iv. 1. The Spirit speaks expressly, that thus it shall be in the Latter times. All which things are confirmed by other places of Scripture: and are applied by St. John to the second Beast; that hath horns like a Lamb, but speaks like a Dragon: Whose Miracles are set forth, Rev. xiii. 13. & xvi. 14. & xix. 20. &c.*

That the first Beast which St. John there describes with seven Heads, was the *Heathen*, and Imperial Rome, I think all Interpreters do agree. Whether the second Beast be the Papal Rome, it is not our business now to enquire, let them see to it that are her Worshippers and Followers. But it is our business to know whom to beware of; and Christ has warn'd us of

\* Mat. xxiv.  
24, 25.  
Which Text  
is thus ap-  
plied by  
the Fathers,  
Chrysostom,  
Austin, &c.



some body that shall pretend to Miracles, and we know of none, but the Papal *Rome*, that does pretend to them. She makes it one of her Marks, and vaunts that she is to be known by her Miracles.

But what then? did not Christ promise Miracles to his Church? and ought not His Promise to be made good? It is most true, that he did promise, and that he has perform'd, we have sufficient proofs of it, both in Scripture, and in the Records of the Primitive Church. For it was necessary that our great Prophet should be made known to us, as well in his Doctrine, as in his Person; that the Christian Faith should be planted and settled by Miracles. But when this Doctrine was written and publish'd, and wherethis Faith was planted and generally received; Then there was no such necessity; Then it was enough to say, *thus it is written*; which Writings were as obligatory to all them that had received this Doctrine, as if they had been preach'd to them severally by persons risen from the dead. Of which those Fathers were so thoroughly satisfied that lived in those times, when most part of the world was already converted; that they plainly profess, that now the

v. Ambros. in  
1 Cor. xii. in  
fin.



the time of Miracles was at an end. They are few and rare now, if any, saith *Chrysostome* in *Hom. 4. on Mat.* There are more feign'd ones amongst false Christians, then true ones amongst the true; saith the Author of the Imperfect work, *Hom. 49.* 'Tis enough for Christians, that the old Miracles are read to them, saith *St. Austin* \*; and for Heathens, that Miracles are yet done by us, though not so Frequently, nor so Manifestly, as in former times.

\* *De Civ. Dei*  
l. 22. c. 8, 9,  
10.

Little did these good men think, that within some Ages after they were dead, and in those places where there were no Heathens to convert, there should arise a sect of Christians more abounding with Miracles in some one age, than were ever seen in all ages of the world before: and the Reason is plain, for those Fathers never dreamt of those new Doctrines and designs that would have need to be usher'd in and supported with new Miracles; nor of the wickedness of those men that help the Devil to invent them; nor of the gross ignorance of an after-age, that fitted the people to receive 'em. All which things, had they not conspired together, it had been Impossible for such monstrous Absurdities to be

imposed upon the Faith of so great a part of Mankind.

How could those strange Fictions of Purgatory have ever obtain'd; if men had not been fool'd into the belief of them, with pretended Visions, and Revelations, and Apparitions? Who could ever have been so Sottish, as to adore the works of the Pencil, and the Chizzle; unless the dumb things themselves had been made to move, and sweat, and talk, and weep for it? What Believer of the true God would ever have stoopt to the Invocation of his fellow-creatures? nay to invoke them more then God, (for God is not so often pray'd to, as the *Virgin Mary*) but that these blessed Creatures themselves, as well as their deluded worshippers, have been abused intolerably by the forgers of Miracles? I shall instance but in one Doctrine more; I might do it in many, for there is hardly any one of their upstart Doctrines; which has not been taught or promoted this way; but this is the transcendent soppery of all, the Doctrine of Transubstantiation. A Miracle it self they call it, in their Manual, which teaches them to say thus at the Elevation; *Oh Miracle! Oh the Goodness &c. This is done by no Juggling, but in the open sight of*  
all

*all the lookers on.* And what do the Lookers on Discern? Do they see any visible change of the Elements? no, not the least shadow of alteration: But what is it that they believe? a Miracle? Nay, more than a Miracle, flat Impossibility and Contradiction. A subject to be without accidents, and accidents without any subject. They believe the same body to be at the same time in so many several places, and whole in every place; in Heaven, upon Earth, both here, and at *Rome*, and in both the *Indies*. Oh monstrous belief! had not this need to be supported with Miracles? It was propagated by them, and *Bellarmino* \* proves it by them, because some have seen the Host to bleed, others have seen a Child in the place of it; and he tells us, that *St. Anthony of Padua's* horse forsook his Oats to go and worship it.

\* *de Sacram.  
Eucharistia,  
l. 3. c. 8.*

I am sensible that these things are very ridiculous, and therefore I am ashamed to mention any more of them. And yet, I hope, you will excuse us, if we mention in our Sermons such things as have been the chief Arguments of theirs; and such Arguments as their great Masters of Controversie despair not, that some may possibly be fools enough to believe them. But if I should proceed into their Legends  
and

and Lives; if I should spread before you the filth of those lewd Romances; I should seem to have too little regard to this Place, and to this Presence. They are stuf with such absurd Tales, such idle and extravagant Prodigies: as if the Devil had invented them in a wanton humour; being not content to have affronted the true Miracles of God, and to have had his Will upon the Doctrine of Christ; but he must insult also, and sport himself with the Ignorance and Superstition of Men.

I cannot think of these things without some wonder at those men, who, knowing that these things are written in their own Books, and that some of us are able to Read them, can yet be so impudent as to revile and scoffe at the Reformation. That happy Recovery of Christian Religion! without which, their old Tales would have been Gospel still; and the Cheat would have proceeded farther still, and 'tis hard to imagine what a Monster, by this time, Christianity would have grown. I know some of them say, that they themselves are the better for it, which yet may be a very great Question. For though the Crafts-men among them are grown more wary of late daies, in shewing of their Tricks,  
and

and the Writers of them bring their Matters more within compass than their Predecessors did: yet they can never wipe off the shame of their Old doings, while they read Lessons in their Churches collected out of those Legends; and while they Retain those Doctrines, (nay they make them part of their Creed,) that owe, some their Being, and all their Reputation, to those gross and palpable Impostures. For us, we have great cause to bless God for the Reformation; which, like Christianity when it first appear'd in the world, has chased away these Demons and their Oracles from among us. I do not hear they work any Miracles among us of late daies; unless this be a Miracle, which I think is no Wonder, that some persons, for some causes, are won over to so corrupt a Religion. For our parts, we pretend to no new Miracles, nor have any Occasion, while we content our selves with the old Doctrines, While we hold to the Prophet that God has sent us, we may rest in those Miracles that He wrought for us. God grant we may be wrought by 'em into a due Faith and Obedience.

First, we owe a duty of Faith to the Doctrines of our Prophet; to all that have been

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taught by him and his Apostles , and are left written for us in the Holy Scriptures. In which Scriptures, though there be *many things hard to be understood, which ignorant and unstable Souls wrest to their own Damnation: yet all those things are Plainly deliver'd, which are Necessary for us to know.* Which were therefore collected by the Apostles into the *Creed*; and own'd by the Fathers under the name of the *Apostolical Tradition*: the Profession of which was necessary for every man, at his Baptism , to make him a *Christian*; and was sufficient for any man, that was Baptiz'd, to be known by as a Member of the *Catholic Church*.

This is the Tradition, not of one or two , but of all Ages: This is the Faith, not of this or that, but of all Churches: as far as Christianity goes, it is the same Faith and Tradition still. This has the seal of God to it, in all the Miracles of Christ, and of his Apostles , and of the Primitive Christians. Whosoever Adds to it, or Varies from it, (especially if he pretend to Miracles, of which the Scripture has forewarn'd us,) we are bound to despise both Him and his Doctrines. If we hold ourselves close to this Faith, and if This should  
happen

happen to deceive us; what have we to say? but with St. *Victor*, Oh Lord, it is thou that hast deceiv'd us; Thou hast given such plain Demonstrations, such visible Testimonies, of thy Almighty hand to it; that if This should be false, we know not what can be true. For there is no possible way of certainty of things removed from bodily sense, no way to make any thing surer to our belief; then that is, by which we are made sure of this, that this Faith, this Christian Doctrine, was taught by that Prophet that was sent from God.

Lastly, we owe the duty of Obedience to his Precepts, to those Rules of life which he has given us in the name of God. Rules that, like their Author, are full of Justice and Goodness; then which nothing can be more fitly contrived, to make us live happily here in This world, and to prepare us for a Better life in the world to come. Nor do they provide only for the Private, but also for the Publick. They both Direct and Secure every man in his own proper Station. So that he were neither a Friend to Himself, nor a Lover of humane Society, that should not heartily submit to these Laws; though he were led to it by no other consideration, but that



of their own Goodness and Utility.

But withall when we consider, from what hand they come; and by whom, and in what manner they were sent: how can we acquit our selves, in the breach of these Laws, of the highest Ingratitude and Rebellion against Almighty God? That good God, that has been pleased to require nothing of us, but such things as of themselves are truly best for us; and yet, as if that were not enough to oblige us, has recommended 'em by such a Prophet, and confirm'd them to us by undeniable Testimonies. Unless we Obey these Laws, what can we expect from Him? what Ought we to think of our selves? If the *Jews*, out of a misunderstanding of God's Counsel, did oppose and reject it; If that whole Generation of men were overwhelmed with such Calamities, as no other Nation ever felt, no other Age ever knew; If their whole Posterity were sent wandring about the World, to make us fear that great God that has sent these Examples to our doors: How shall We ever hope to escape, if we neglect so great a Salvation as is now offered to us? What Examples may God make of us in This World? What Judgments must we look for in the Other? What Penalties, what measure of Wrath, can be too much for such  
ungrateful



ungrateful Wretches, such Rebels against the  
Supream Majesty of God?

I beseech you pardon me this great Vehemence, if any degree of Vehemence can need pardon, in the pressing of things that so infinitely concern you. That these things do so, we shall be more sensible hereafter. It is but a little while; and He that is now our Prophet, shall come to be our Judge, and shall call us to a strict Account before him. Then will the Observation of his Laws be a Comfort and a Joy: Then will the Neglect of them cause Horror and Desperation. 'Twill be a restless Grief to reflect, how easily we were won to Neglect them; how easily we might have Observ'd them. We have yet the Opportunity before us. Good God give us Hearts to Consider it: Now in this time of *Advent*, so to remember the First coming of thy Son, when He came to be our Prophet; that we may be prepared, and ready for his Second coming, when He shall come to be our Judge.  
*To whom, &c.*

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T H E E N D.